



FA Cup: Third Round

Bodger who could wreck Boro'

RICHARD YALLOP looks at Wycombe Wanderers who face Middlesbrough in the Cup.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS have never known a Christmas quite like it. Ever since they beat Bournemouth 2-1 in the second round of the FA Cup, thereby winning the right to play Middlesbrough at home in tomorrow's third round tie, the club officials have not had a moment's peace from the fair-weather supporters desperate for a ticket.

Things became so bad for the club treasurer, Roger Lee, that he was mobbed each time he drove into town to do some Christmas shopping. As soon as he went to park his Alfa Romeo people started rushing to open the passenger door. In desperation one day he went into the club's solicitors, told the secretary there: "This really is intolerable. I can't even drive my car into town," and she came up with the idea of putting on a woman's wig. As it so happened he was wearing dark glasses and a trenchcoat, so he just turned up the collar over the wig, walked unmolested to the shops, and bought his son's present.

Secretly, though, he is thrilled that the spotlight has turned on the amateur club founded in 1884 by a group of old boys from Wycombe's School. For him it is the culmination of a reputation that has been growing since the war, during which time the club have won the Isthmian League

five times, and been runners-up a further three times. Strangely their Cup record is less bright, and although they have been favourites many times, they have won the Amateur Cup only once, in 1931. However, when the club play Middlesbrough it will be the first time in their ninety-year history that they have played either in the third round of the FA Cup or against First Division opponents.

The club is run by a local triumvirate of the chairman, Jack Smethurst, a retired police superintendent, Roger Lee, a heating engineer, and the secretary, Bert Crump, a white collar worker at G-Plan. Between them they have recorded 30 years of unpaid service to the club, and one of the best decisions they ever made was to choose Brian Lee as manager five seasons ago. Now 38, he was the youngest FA staff coach ever appointed, and spent his formative years under Walter Winterbottom, the former England team manager and director of coaching. From 1960 to 1967 Lee was deputy director of the National Training Centre at Lilleshall, and after that was appointed director of the sports centre at Bisham Abbey in Buckinghamshire.

Brian Lee thinks deeply about football, as he does about most things. He was appointed a magistrate in Marlow in 1971, only three years after settling in the area. He says his greatest

influences in the coaching of soccer have been Winterbottom and Ron Greenwood, who has strong ideas on how footballers should behave as well as how football should be played. "The trouble with footballers nowadays is they do not settle down and commit themselves to marriage," he has said. Lee, too, believes that when he is considering new players for the team character is more important than a dazzling assortment of skills. He has turned down more than one famous amateur player who wanted to join Wycombe because he did not think he was right for the family atmosphere at the club.

In the five seasons Lee has been manager Wycombe have won the League three times, been runners-up once, and fourth the other time. His analytical mind is one of his most effective weapons. He is able to study the opposition and pick out their weaknesses; he felt from the beginning the side had a good chance against Bournemouth because their manager, Trevor Hartley, was a young man, lacking in experience. Hartley was dismissed yesterday.

Success has brought no desire to turn fully professional. Wycombe have an average gate of 2,250, but only once, three years ago, has the gate money covered costs. But Brian Lee's real reason for not turning professional is that players lose their appetite for sport once it

becomes full-time. He considers boredom is one of the greatest problems facing the professional footballer.

Of the side that Lee inherited only two, Maskell, the goalkeeper, and Horsman, the goalscorer, remain in the present squad of sixteen which includes three England amateur internationals, Mead, Reardon, and Searle, two more from the squad, Hollifield and Perrin, two Welsh internationals, Phillips and Evans and Horsman, who was in the British Olympic squad in 1968.

The team has plenty of characters, but the best loved locally is "Bodger" Horsman, 33, born and bred in High Wycombe and so-called because of his work as a bodger, or wood machinist, in a furniture factory. He is to Wycombe Wanderers what Bobby Charlton is to Manchester United. He has played for the club since he was a junior and has scored more goals for them than anyone else is likely to achieve. Eight years ago he scored 80 goals in a season, last season he was top scorer in the Isthmian League, and he is now "a bit of a local legend." Needless to say he scored the equaliser against Bournemouth.

Roger Lee says he is irresistible when he takes the field: "You take him to your heart at once. He's such a little chap, with bow legs, just the sort you'd hear women saying they'd love to mother."